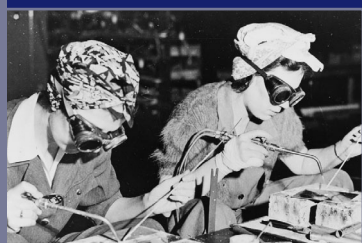


*The Veterans History Project  
collects and preserves personal  
stories and other documents  
from America's war veterans,  
and those American civilians  
who served in support of them.*



## FIELD KIT



## Conducting and Preserving Interviews

Library of Congress  
American Folklife Center

## FIELD KIT

### Veterans History Project at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

The Kit has four sections:

1. Overview of the Veterans History Project
2. Interview and Recording Guidelines
3. Delivering Your Materials to the Veterans History Project
4. Required Forms

This field kit provides guidelines and tips to volunteers who are conducting interviews for the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

By contributing an interview, you become a valued participant in the Veterans History Project and play an important role in the creation of a collection that will become a permanent part of the nation's record.

The following guidelines and forms are designed to make it easy for you to conduct an interview and send it to the Veterans History Project at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

For additional copies of this kit and other materials, please contact the toll-free message line at 1-888-371-5848, or email [vohp@loc.gov](mailto:vohp@loc.gov).

The Veterans History Project Web site at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets) features selected collections and information on how to participate in the project.

**The Veterans History Project, an official partner of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, is made possible by the generous support of the United States Congress, AARP (Founding Corporate Sponsor), and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Charitable Service Trust.**

*All photos on cover courtesy Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Left to right: LC-USZ62-104148, LC-USZ62-122601, LC-USZ62-89914, and LC-USZ62-99040.*

# 1. Overview of the Veterans History Project

Americans can learn much from those who served. The Veterans History Project honors our nation's war veterans and those who supported them. This project, created by Congress, is building a lasting legacy of recorded interviews, memoirs, and other documents chronicling the veterans' and other citizens' wartime experiences, and how those experiences affected their lives and America itself. The Veterans History Project pledges to preserve this legacy for generations to come.

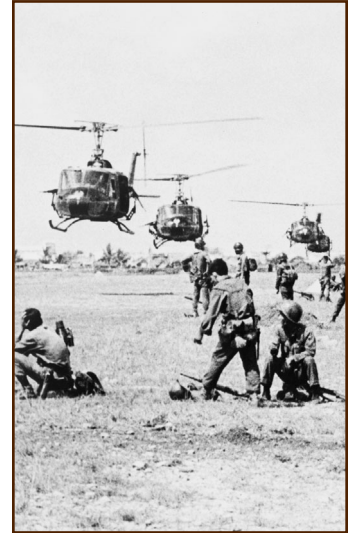
The U.S. Congress voted unanimously for legislation to create the Veterans History Project. It was signed into law on October 27, 2000 (Public Law 106-380). The project is funded by the United States Congress and a generous grant from AARP, the project's founding corporate sponsor. The goals of the project are to collect and preserve stories of service, honor those who served, and make it possible to learn about the past through the first-hand accounts of men and women who lived through extraordinary times.

The Veterans History Project collects stories from men and women from all branches of service: the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and Merchant Marine, with an emphasis on World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. The project also documents the contributions of civilians, such as war industry workers and medical volunteers, who served in support of the armed forces.

## SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION

The focus of the Veterans History Project is on audio and video recordings of personal wartime experiences. The project also welcomes written memoirs, diaries, as well as collections of letters, and photographs that tell the veteran's or civilian's story. Maps, home movies, drawings, and other documents are welcome.

The project does not collect or accept objects such as medals, uniforms, or other memorabilia.



**U.S. helicopters  
prepare to air-lift  
Vietnamese government  
Rangers of the 43rd  
Battalion into battle  
during the Vietnam  
War, 1965. United  
Press International.**

*Courtesy Prints &  
Photographs Division,  
Library of Congress.  
LC-USZ62-122601.*



**Pilot standing in front of U.S. Army airplane during World War I, ca. 1918.**

*Courtesy Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress. LC-USZ62-99040.*

**For more information, tips, examples, and in-depth discussion of guidelines, please visit the project's Web site at [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets).**

## WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR MATERIALS?

After you submit the interview, with the required Biographical Data and Release Forms:

- VHP will ask you for any missing forms.
- VHP will send a letter acknowledging participation, and receipt of the recording, to both the interviewer and the person interviewed.
- Information from the required forms submitted will be entered into VHP's database.
- The interview and other documents will be preserved according to professional archival standards.
- Information from the Biographical Data Form will be presented to the public in the project's National Registry of Service on the Web site. The Registry lists the names and service histories of persons for whom the project has documentary materials. It also names the person who conducted the interview.
- Your materials will be available to researchers, educators, family members, and others at the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress.

## 2. Interview and Recording Guidelines

### EQUIPMENT

The project is able to receive nearly all formats of audio and video recordings. For best results, get to know your recording equipment and set it up in advance of the time you plan to begin the interview.

The Veterans History Project recommends that you use the best video or audio recorder and microphone(s) available to you. For audio recordings, a digital or standard cassette machine is preferable to mini or micro cassette recorders. For better sound quality we recommend the use of external microphones rather than those built into your recorder or camera. Built in microphones tend to produce less clear sound quality. If possible, use a lapel microphone or a microphone on a stand placed in front of the interviewee. A tripod will be necessary if you use a video camera.

Set your microphone six to twelve inches from the person being interviewed and test for sound quality by asking the person to speak, stopping the tape, rewinding, and playing back.

When making a video, focus the camera on the upper body of the person being interviewed. Have the view wide enough to capture hand gestures and slight sideways movements. Keep the camera on the person being interviewed. The zoom feature should be used sparingly. Pictures and artifacts discussed during the interview can be filmed at the end of the session for additional clarity.

Be mindful of your lighting. Don't videotape with a window or other bright light behind your subject, or you might not be able to distinguish their features on the recording. To avoid shadows on the face, direct and even lighting is recommended.

## INTERVIEW LOCATION

The location of your interview is almost as important as the equipment you use. Find a quiet area. Rooms with soft surfaces such as carpeting and upholstery provide better sound quality and fewer echoes. Avoid chiming clocks, humming fluorescent lights, hissing air vents, ringing phones, or background noises from television, radio, or other conversations.

### Caution!

When your interview is completed, immediately remove the "erase tabs" on the audio or video cassette to avoid accidental erasure, or to prevent accidental recording over the original.

Always check the sound quality regardless of the equipment you are using



Japanese American soldiers of the 442nd Combat Team at dance, Camp Shelby, Mississippi, with Japanese American women from the Jerome and Rohwer relocation centers in Arkansas, June 1943. U.S. War Department Bureau of Public Relations.

*Courtesy Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress. LC-USZ62-89914.*

The National Registry  
of Service honors  
Veterans History  
Project participants  
on the World Wide Web  
at [http://www.loc.gov/  
vets/vets-registry.html](http://www.loc.gov/vets/vets-registry.html).

Please note that  
when you donate  
your story to the  
Library of Congress,  
you still own the  
publication and  
other rights to your  
intellectual property.

## THE INTERVIEW

Prepare for a 30 to 90 minute interview. The end product gains depth if the interviewer is able to establish a relationship with the subject in advance and find out about topics that might be covered. Some research into the subject area helps to formulate questions.

Introduce each recording by stating the date, location of interview, names of persons present, and any organizations or groups that you want to acknowledge. Please spell out any names that may be unclear.

Photographs, letters, or other records can be useful to jog the interviewee's memory. If the person interviewed is willing to donate photographs, letters, or other documents, they will add to the value of the interview. Originals are preferred, but high-quality, legible copies are acceptable.

Complete the Biographical Data Form in advance. This will give you important information that you can use in your session. The secret to a good interview is to have the right questions to move it along, but not to interrupt the person's story. He or she might be recollecting something unexpected and interesting. Try not to ask questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." Ask how, when, and why questions. Keep your questions and comments brief. Be a good listener. Encourage the speaker by smiles or nods. Remember that the interview is a process of learning, so be yourself and ask for explanations if you do not understand something. Asking follow-up questions is a great way to expand on a point or to further develop the story.

*Caution:* Although candor makes for a great interview, extremely derogatory statements may be regretted later.

As you plan your questions, it may be helpful to think of your interview having segments.

1. **For the Record.** Here is where you record your announcement about where and when the recording is taking place, and who is present. Obviously, some questions may vary depending on whether the person interviewed was a civilian during wartime, or had a military career.
2. **Jogging Memory.** Ask questions like: What did you do before you joined the service? Where were you living? Did you enlist or were you drafted? Why did you choose your branch of service? Tell me about your first days in the service, or, how did you get your civilian job? Why did you join? Dates are good memory triggers. *For instance:* Where were you on December 7, 1941—the attack on Pearl Harbor? Where were you when the war ended?
3. **Experiences and Life.** Ask questions like: Where did you serve? What was your job assignment? Did you see combat? Tell me about your most memorable experience. Were there many casualties in your unit or on your ship? Were you ever fearful? Tell me about the food and provisions where you were. How did you pass the time? How did you stay in touch with people at home? What did you do for recreation? How did you celebrate holidays? What skills or lessons did you learn?
4. **After Service/After War.** Ask questions like: Do you recall the day you left service? Where were you when the war ended? What did you do in the days and weeks after your service? Did you make any close friendships? Do you continue any of those relationships?
5. **Later Years and Closing.** Ask questions like: What was your career after the war? Did your wartime career contribute to it? How did your experiences contribute to your thinking about war and military service? Are you a member of any veterans' or other organizations related to your service? Why? Do you attend reunions?

Always remember to thank the veteran or civilian you interviewed. Be sure to have them sign the Veteran's Release Form; the interviewer and recording operator should also complete release forms.

Remember to fully complete the Biographical Data Form. The Veteran's Release Form and Interviewer's Release Form must also be submitted to permit the Library of Congress to use and share the information for purposes of research.



### 3. Delivering Your Interview to the Veterans History Project



Women welders in a Ford bomber plant in the United States during World War II, April 1942. U.S. Office of War Information.

*Courtesy Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress. LC-USZ62-104148.*

Before submitting your materials to the Library of Congress, please make any copies you may need for the interviewee, yourself, or for deposit in a local library or historical society.

#### **IMPORTANT!**

**Please Use a Commercial Delivery Service!**

**Please do not send materials to the Veterans History Project through the U.S. Postal Service!**

Because of safety procedures, the U.S. Postal Service irradiates all incoming mail to the Library of Congress. This, unfortunately, causes damage to paper and plastic materials.

Please use a commercial delivery service such as UPS or FedEx.

Please send your recorded audio or video interview, other materials such as photographs, together with the required forms to:

**The Veterans History Project  
American Folklife Center  
Library of Congress  
101 Independence Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20540-4615**

### 4. Required Forms

**Biographical Data Form  
Veteran's Release Form  
Interviewer's Release Form  
Audio and Video Recording Log (if applicable)  
Photograph Log (if applicable)  
Manuscript Data Sheet (if applicable)**





# Biographical Data Form

To ensure inclusion in our National Registry of Service, this form must accompany each submission. Please use a separate form or additional sheet for service in more than one war.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Veteran ☐ Civilian ☐ \_\_\_\_\_  
first middle last maiden name

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ month/day/year  
Male ☐ Female ☐

Branch of Service or Wartime Activity \_\_\_\_\_

Battalion, Regiment, Division, Unit, Ship, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Enlisted ☐ Drafted ☐ Service dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

War(s) in which individual served \_\_\_\_\_

Locations of military or civilian service \_\_\_\_\_

Was the veteran a prisoner of war? Yes ☐ No ☐

Did the veteran or civilian sustain combat or service-related injuries? Yes ☐ No ☐

Medals or special service awards. If so, please list (be as specific as possible): \_\_\_\_\_

Are photographs included? Yes ☐ No ☐ (If yes, please complete the Photograph Log in this kit.)

Are manuscripts included? Yes ☐ No ☐ (If yes, please complete the Manuscript Data Sheet in this kit.)

Does the veteran or civilian have field maps (Yes ☐ No ☐) or wartime-related home movies (Yes ☐ No ☐)  
that he or she would like to share with the Library of Congress? (If yes, we will contact you shortly.)

Interviewer (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Partner organization affiliation (if any, i.e. AARP, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Please use reverse for any additional biographical information.



# Veteran's Release Form

## TO BE COMPLETED BY VETERAN OR CIVILIAN

(In cases of deceased veterans, to be completed by the donor of the material.)

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a participant in the Veterans History Project (hereinafter "VHP"). I understand that the purpose of the VHP is to collect audio- and video-taped oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them as well as selected related documentary materials (such as photographs and manuscripts) that may be deposited in the permanent collections of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The deposited documentary materials will serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences; and may be used for scholarly and educational purposes. I understand that the American Folklife Center plans to retain the product of my participation as part of its permanent collection and that the materials may be used for exhibition, publication, presentation on the World Wide Web and successor technologies, and for promotion of the Library of Congress and its activities in any medium.

I hereby grant to the Library of Congress ownership of the physical property delivered to the Library and the right to use the property that is the product of my participation (for example, my interview, performance, photographs, and written materials) as stated above. By giving permission, I understand that I do not give up any copyright or performance rights that I may hold.

I also grant to the Library of Congress my absolute and irrevocable consent for any photograph(s) provided by me or taken of me in the course of my participation in the VHP to be used, published, and copied by the Library of Congress and its assignees in any medium.

I agree that the Library may use my name, video or photographic image or likeness, statements, performance, and voice reproduction, or other sound effects without further approval on my part.

I release the Library of Congress, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of such recordings, documents, and artifacts, including but not limited to, any claims for defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

## ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_



# Interviewer's Release Form

## TO BE COMPLETED BY INTERVIEWERS, RECORDING OPERATORS, AND PHOTOGRAPHERS

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a participant in the Veterans History Project (hereinafter "VHP"). I understand that the purpose of the VHP is to collect audio- and video-recorded oral histories of America's war veterans and of those who served in support of them as well as selected related documentary materials such as photographs and manuscripts that may be deposited in the permanent collections of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The deposited documentary materials will serve as a record of American veterans' wartime experiences; and may be used for scholarly and educational purposes. I understand that the American Folklife Center plans to retain the product of my participation as part of its permanent collection and that the materials may be used for exhibition, publication, presentation on the World Wide Web and successor technologies, and for promotion of the Library of Congress and its activities in any medium.

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I release the Library of Congress, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of such recordings, documents, and artifacts, including but not limited to, any claims for defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

### ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if interviewer is a minor) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_



# Audio and Video Recording Log

1. Name and address of collector or interviewer.

Name of Collector/Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

2. Full name and birth date of the veteran or civilian being interviewed as it appears on the recording label and Biographical Data Form.

Name of Veteran/Civilian \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

3. Recording format (please check)

VIDEO type: Betacam ☐ VHS ☐ 8mm ☐ High-8 ☐ Digital ☐ Other ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

AUDIO type: Cassette ☐ Microcassette ☐ CD ☐ Reel ☐ Digital (DAT) ☐ \_\_\_\_\_ (identify)

If audio, is the cassette or reel recorded on both sides? Yes ☐ No ☐

4. Date of Recording \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of recording \_\_\_\_\_

6. Corresponding materials (please check)

Have you included materials other than the recording? Yes ☐ No ☐

If so, please complete the Photograph Log and/or the Manuscript Data Sheet.

7. Please summarize the topics discussed in the interview in their order of appearance on the recording.

Meter Reading  
or Minute Mark

Topics presented in order of discussion on recording

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Continue on back or on additional sheets as needed.)

[illegible][illegible]



# Photograph Log

Photographic prints should be numbered with a soft (no.1) pencil on the back of the photograph in the lower-right corner. If the back is too slick to write on, enclose each photograph in a labeled envelope. Please do not use a pen or marker to label prints. Slides may be numbered on the frame housing. Photographers should sign a release form when possible. If more than five photographs are submitted, please make photocopies of the second page of this form to complete.

Name of Veteran/Civilian \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

## PHOTOGRAPH # 1

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Person(s) left to right \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Photographer (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

## PHOTOGRAPH # 2

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Person(s) left to right \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Photographer (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

(Continue on back.)



# Manuscript Data Sheet

Please complete this form when donating letters, diaries, and other printed and handwritten manuscripts to the Veterans History Project. It is to be used in conjunction with the required Checklist, Biographical Data Form, and Veteran's Release Form.

1. Name and address of collector.

Name of Collector/Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

2. Full name and life dates (birth–death) of the person about whom the manuscripts relate.

In most instances, this person is the veteran or civilian whose name appears on the Biographical Data Form.

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3. Types and dates of manuscripts submitted, for example:

Diary, November 20, 1942–February 17, 1944; Service records, 1951–1953; Letters, 1969–1972; Commendations, 1991; Unpublished memoir, 2001; etc.

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4. Number of items: \_\_\_\_\_ Is this an exact ☐ or estimated ☐ figure?

5. If these items are copies of originals, describe how they were reproduced. Are they transcripts, photocopies, or photographic prints? Identify when the copies were made, and give the name and address of the person or group who holds the originals. Please note that the Veterans History Project encourages you to donate the originals to the Library of Congress or another trusted institution for long-term preservation and for access by researchers. (Continued on back.)



(You may photocopy this side of the form to use for additional photographs if needed.)

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Person(s) left to right \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Photographer (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Person(s) left to right \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Photographer (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

**PHOTOGRAPH #** \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
month/day/year

Person(s) left to right \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Description \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Photographer (if known) \_\_\_\_\_

Form(s) of reproduction: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) reproduced: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of originals: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Occupation or type of activity of the principal person represented in the manuscripts, including significant events and dates in his or her career and the place of residence or location of the activity described. If this information is already recorded in the Biographical Data Form, there is no need to repeat it here.

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7. Describe the scope and content of the manuscripts by addressing the following:

Please identify by name the writers and recipients of the letters and other documents. What is their relationship to the veteran or civilian whose name appears on the Biographical Data Form?

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What historical time period and theaters of war are covered?

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What are the most interesting/important topics and events described in these documents?

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8. Have any of these materials been published or have copies of them been donated elsewhere? If so, please provide full citation of the publication or the location of the copies.

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Veterans History Project  
American Folklife Center  
Library of Congress  
101 Independence Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20540-4615

tel: 202-707-4916  
msg: 1-888-371-5848  
fax: 202-252-2046  
email: [vohp@loc.gov](mailto:vohp@loc.gov)  
[www.loc.gov/vets/](http://www.loc.gov/vets/)



**A version of this instruction kit is also available in large print or in a special audio format for the blind and physically handicapped. Please contact the Veterans History Project for more information on these alternate formats.**